

Senate Bill No. 6

A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT INCREASING ANNUAL FEES RELATED TO PUBLIC WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS; AMENDING SECTION 75-6-108,MCA; AND PROVIDING AN IMMEDIATE EFFECTIVE DATE."

Local Government Room 405

Chairman: John Esp & Committee Members

MY name: Arvid Hiller

Address: 1345 W. Broadway Missoula, Mt.

Position: V.P and General Manager Mountain Water Company

Mountain Water Company is a Private Investor owned water utility that serves potable water and fire protection to the majority of the Missoula Community through 23,000 Service connections.

I am here in Support of Senate Bill 6.

In the 1991 legislative session I was here as a supporter of the initial legislation that created the service fee assessment on water utilities at \$2.25 per service connection. 25 Cents of that fee sun set in 1993.

The testimony I gave in support of the initial assessment in 1991 could in most part apply to the need now to increase the fee from \$2.00 to \$3.00. The reasons are:

1. Montana must retain primacy over its drinking water regulation and compliance enforcement. In my opinion the more local an agency is the better to understand the needs of the public and utilities. If the DEQ does not have the funding to maintain its level of staffing and administer EPA mandated regulations then that primacy can be taken over by the EPA. Generally that would mean compliance enforcement and fines without any support to help understand and meet regulations.

2. The increased Federal (EPA) mandates that drive the drinking water program at the DEQ have steadily increased into 31 Complex regulations. Program costs have had a commensurate increase in large part to meet these mandates.

3. Mountain Water Company has always felt as though the relationship with the DEQ was more of a partnership to make sure its customers are served the safest high quality water. We have always found the Department and staff to be very professional and competent.

4. A majority of small drinking water systems in the state would find it nearly impossible to survive let alone understand and meet all of the EPA mandated regulations without the assistance of DEQ Staff.

Chairman Esp and committee members this additional funding will be a major contributor to making sure Montana retains primacy and control over its drinking water program. I whole-heartedly support Representative Erickson the DEQ and the Public Drinking water supply section in their request to increase the current fee from \$2.00 to \$3.00 per service connection fee and encourage you to vote yes on this bill.

Something I don't think you hear enough of is: Thank you for taking the time to serve the public. I will be available for any questions you may have.